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ABSTRACT

Cooperative research was used in revising and strengthening core courses in a teacher education program. Feedback was used to provide suggestions for more appropriate and relevant knowledge to be presented at the preservice level. In the course of initial research first-year teachers were asked to help identify areas in their teacher education program common core courses which they believed needed improvement. From this research, a list was designed and a validating survey questionnaire sent to public school teachers and administrators and to college teachers and administrators. Results were prioritized and recommendations presented to the State Department of Education and schools of education. Final recommendations on the proposed revised core courses are contained in this report. (JD)

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[Professional Education Core. Human Services Program.] School of Education.

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Most, if not all, preservice programs for teachers have a common core of courses which every prospective teacher candidate must successfully complete. Although program content seems apparent in these courses, sometimes neither the special skills to be developed nor the knowledge base for those skills are so apparent.

For the past several years, the School of Education, Auburn University, has engaged in processes designed to examine and improve that component of the school's undergraduate program known as the "professional common core." The genesis of these efforts was the 1973 "Alabama First-Year Teacher Pilot Program," begun to assist first year teachers with the transition from student to teacher. Subsequently, the program changed in name and broadened in focus to include inservice education for all professionals (including first year teachers), and to effect improvement in preservice programs in all of Alabama.

Concomitant with continual feedback garnered from program participants suggesting improvements for the undergraduate preparation of teachers, the Auburn School of Education Dean, during the Spring of 1975, challenged the education faculty to examine thoroughly and revamp "common core." The common core, refers to those competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, processes) which provide future teachers with a sound foundation from which to build successful teaching performance. The competencies involved have general applicability for all students, no matter what level they will teach or what subject area of concentration they desire.

The process of redefining the professional core began with the appointment of an interdepartmental task force. Core competencies identified

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by faculty were then circulated to each department for further discussion. The departments, in turn, received more input from practicing teachers and others. Using a content analysis procedure, categories were developed from the competency statements. A competency orientation framework has been maintained throughout the categorization process. Later, subcommittees developed specific courses for the core and began to propose means for implementing the core proposal.

The core consists of three foundations, one interdepartmental, one educational media, one counselor, and one administration course. The latter two departments, unaccustomed to teaching undergraduates, had to design specific courses for this purpose-- and, the course is taught by regular departmental professional staff.

The core structure implemented Summer, 1978, is as follows:

Year	Content Areas	Credits (qtr. hrs.)
Freshman	Career Exploration and Planning	1 hr.
	Orientation for Transfers	
Sophomore	Educational Media	2 hrs.
	Educational Psychology	5 hrs.
Junior	Cultural Foundations of Education	5 hrs.
	Human Relations Training in Teacher Education	2 hrs.
Senior	Evaluation in Education	5 hrs.
	Organization, Administration and Financing of Education	2 hrs.

Student evaluations indicate our initial efforts have been successful. The core is subject to continued revision for improvement.

Too frequently prospective teachers exit their preservice education programs with insufficient understanding of their roles as teachers of children. Many new teachers are apt to have such unanswered questions as: Where do I fit? Who am I in the structure of public education? Where am I in the educational bureaucracy? What is my role as a teacher? What are the roles of other education personnel? How do we relate to each other?

College and university preservice education programs, indeed, faculty, may be the sources of such frusterations. And why? Are professors frequently a reason for students' apprehensiveness and confusion about their roles as teachers? How many preservice education programs are often less than relevant? Does program content provide a sufficient knowledge base for prospective teachers to acquire the skills necessary to function effectively both in the classroom and as professionals beyond the classroom?

Most, if not all, preservice programs for teachers have a core of courses which every prospective teacher candidate must successfully complete. Although program content seems apparent in these courses, sometimes neither the special skills to be developed nor the knowledge base for those skills are so apparent. A defensible knowledge base for courses required of teachers is essential.

Recently, the AACTE Commission of Education for the Profession of Teaching combined their thoughts in a text titled Educating a Profession.[1] In it, they urge (among other things) the acquisition of a knowledge base as fundamental in a rigorous preservice program; a knowledge base that students ought to have before they go out to teach; a knowledge base which will allow them to better realize what their roles are as teachers, and what the roles of significant others are in the educational system; a knowledge base that will

make them much better prepared for going out in the system and say "Hey, this person is a principal, supervisor, department chairman, etc., he/she's supposed to do such and such." Whether the actual person in that position does that or not is another matter; but at least the preservice teacher will generally know what to expect from other personnel within the system. When they assume their roles as teachers in the schools, they'll know, for example, whether or not they can take students on a field trip under certain conditions, what rights students may have and so on. This is important knowledge of role of others and self and, without this knowledge base, the commission asserts, "Teachers will remain forever captives of limited personal experiences"[2]--a delimitation that public education can ill afford to accept or have thrust upon it.

The Commission goes on to say that what may have passed as adequate teacher education in simpler times is not sufficient in today's more complex and fast moving society. To begin one's teaching career without knowledge of effective techniques, without some knowledge of analysis of the teaching act, without knowledge of who and where I am in the structure of public education and what I am supposed to do, where do I fit--will simply not suffice--nor is it justifiable in any frame of rationale. Future teachers must be prepared by giving them a knowledge base which will permit them to know the present system, question it and add creative input for its betterment. The committee stated it thusly: "The survival of our country's educational system depends upon a preparation and research arm which strives to create the future, not just accept it."[3] Frymier suggests that the future becomes solving the problems of today. By identifying today's problem and setting in motion a plan to solve those problems, we create the future by what we do to solve the present.[4] This appears to be a somewhat gargantuan task--and it is!

Building a knowledge base may best be effected by analysis of the present system, ferreting out strengths and weaknesses, and then using the strengths to build and create a stronger, more relevant program. Rebuilding the common core for the preservice teacher education program is a lengthy, laborious process. One such process in this attempt is herein described.

Cooperative Research

For the past several years, the School of Education at Auburn University has engaged in processes designed to examine and improve that component of the School's undergraduate program known as the 'core'. Efforts began in the fall of 1973 with the initiation of the "Alabama First-Year Teacher Pilot Program.' At that time, the major objective was to assist first-year teachers (FYT) with the transition from student to professional. The focus of the Alabama First-Year Teacher Pilot Program was expanded and its name changed to the Continuous Professional Development Program (CPDP).* During this and subsequent years greater emphasis has been placed on (1) inservice education for all professionals including first-year persons, and (2) change and improvement in preservice programs.

In improving teacher preparation programs at Auburn University, the CPDP program participants' feedback was used to provide suggestions for more appropriate/relevant knowledge to be presented at the preservice level.

In the course of the initial research, six-hundred-forty-one FYTs in Alabama were asked to help identify areas in their teacher education (preservice) program common core which they believed needed improvement. This task was accomplished by two means: structured group interviews and information supplied by Support Teams. From this initial research, a list

was designed and a validating survey questionnaire sent to public school teachers and administrators and to college teachers and administrators. Results were prioritzed and recommendations presented to the State Department of Education and all universities' schools of education.

Concomitant with the continual feedback garnered from program participants suggesting improvements for the undergraduate preparation of teachers, the Auburn School of Education Dean, during the Spring of 1975, challenged the education faculty to examine throughly and revamp the "common core". The process of redefining the professional core began with the appointment of an interdepartmental task force. This task force, in a desire to get direct and thorough participation by the entire faculty, constructed and distributed a questionnaire designed to determine what the entire faculty saw as the components of the professional core. The core competencies identified by the faculty were then circulated to each department for further discussion. Using a content analysis procedure, categories were developed from the competency statements. A competency orientation framework has been maintained throughout the categorization process.

In June, 1976, the interdepartmental task force produced a report containing several important guidelines, among which were:

> "The following working definition was agreed upon early in the deliberation of the Task Force: Common Core refers to competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, processes) which contribute to successful performance by all teachers. These competencies have general applicability for all students engaged in teacher preparation."
>
> "The task Force is not charged with the responsibility for devising a plan for implementing the Core."

In July, 1976, a subcommittee of the Administrative Council was appointed to work with other department heads and the faculty to review and clarify the Core Committee report and to begin to propose means for implementing the Core proposal. Their charge was:

A. Review the report of the School of Education Common Core Committee. Make recommendations for additions, deletions, or restatement as the department deems appropriate.

B. Once this review has been completed, the department should then determine what its contribution, if any, can and should be to the Common Core experience of undergraduate students in the School of Education.

C. A plan should be devised which will permit implementation in September, 1977.

The work of the departmental representatives, the department heads, and representatives from the Dean's office culminated with the agreement that the content of the Core could be assigned to Foundations of Education (FED), Educational Administration (AED), Counselor Education (CED), and Educational Media (EM). These departments were then charged with the responsibility of developing the specific course proposals to meet the current needs of the Core. By mutual agreement, that material being provided through the two-hour orientation course was also brought into the deliberations at this time. This process led to the development of three proposed courses in FED, and one course each in AED, CED, EM, and Interdepartmental Education. These proposed courses were than circulated to all departments for further discussion and feedback. Based on feedback from the departments, the courses were revised. At the Fall, 1977, meeting of the Administrative Council consensus was reached that the proposed course structure did meet the needs of a professional undergraduate Core for the School of Education. It was further decided that the course proposals would be referred to the Undergraduate Committee for further recommendations. It is important to note that, while this process was taking place in the School of Education, the State Department of Education was developing new certificiation guidelines. The new guidelines by themselves would have forced some changes in the School's professional core. Because of our close working relationship with the State Department of Education, we were able to incorporate their thinking into our deliberations and the new proposed Core can meet the proposed specifications of the new guidelines.

The Undergraduate Committee made its final recommendation on the proposed Core Courses in the fall of 1977. At that time, the following principles were stated:

PRINCIPLES

1. To the best of our knowledge, the recommendations for the Undergraduate Core are based upon consensus or upon majority opinion.

2. A system will be developed which will enable us to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the Core courses once the implementation process is begun. Further more, recommendations for adjustments in the content, sequence, and implementation of the courses will be solicited.

3. Departments responsible for the delivery of Core courses have agreed to:

   (a) Cooperate to the best of their abilities to offer the courses in the manner desired by the receiving departments (e.g., integrated into the Elementary Education block).

   (b) Review the content of Core courses as they are implemented to appropriately adjust the number of objectives and amount of content according to the number of credits alloted to the courses.

   (c) Continue dialogue with the receiving departments as to appropriate content in each of the Core courses.

4. Attempts will be made to incorporate more specific content about special and handicapped education concepts into the proposed courses (e.g., PL 492 in AED 481, Exceptionality concepts in CED 322).

5. The proposed course recommendations can meet the new, proposed Alabama Certification Standards. For example, the proposed certification standards call for a minimum of 16 quarter hours of humanistic and behavioral studies. The proposed Core courses AED 481, FED 300, FED 350, and FED 400 add up to 17 quarter hours. The proposed standards also require 16 quarter hours of curriculum and teaching which can incorporate EM 200 and CED 322 (4 hours).

6. To the best of our knowledge, the core course proposals do not contradict any recommendations made by the last NCATE or Southern Association visiting teams. The proposals help to rectify some weaknesses noted by the Alabama State Department visiting team in January, 1976.

7. The courses are numbered such that the following is possible:

   1 course at the 100 level (IED 101)
   1 course at the 200 level (EM 200)
   3 courses at the 300 level (FED 300 (could be taken by sophomores), FED 350, CED 322
   2 courses at the 400 level (FED 400, AED 481).

8. Consistent with the philosophy of including laboratory and/or field experiences in our undergraduate program, the proposed core courses will contain some element or relationship to the public school setting.

The Core Task Force recommended seven categories of competencies and several competency areas related to each category. The categories, their competency areas, and the courses which address the competency areas are identified below:

I. Category: Academic, Personal and Career Guidance

A. Competency Areas

1. Guidance-related activities and support services available.
2. Role of teacher.
3. Relation of educational programs and career choices to self-image of students.
4. Awareness of counseling process.

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed IED 101 and CED 322; existing departmental orientation courses.

II. Category: Interpersonal Communication Skills

A. Competency Areas

1. Listening Actively
2. Leading
3. Reflecting

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed CED 322; existing courses in curriculum and teaching.

III. Category: Instructional Planning

A. Competency Areas

1. Formulating learner goals and objectives.
2. Selecting instructional strategy.
3. Planning and implementing learning situation.
4. Evaluating learner progress.
5. Evaluating instruction.

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed EM 200, FED 400; existing courses in curriculum and teaching.

IV. Category: Organization, Administration, Financing

A. Competency Areas

1. Organization
   a. Federal, State, Local
   b. Patterns of organization

2. Administration
   a. Administrative styles
   b. Legal structure
   c. Decision-making procedures

3. Financing
   a. Federal, State, Local
   b. Budget development
   c. Salary administration

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed AED 481; existing or proposed courses (SED) in departments.

V. Category: Human Development and Learning

A. Competency Areas

1. Developmental-Learning theories and theorists.
2. Elements of theories and implications for classroom practice.
3. Motivational theories, concepts, and practices and their applications.
4. Specific areas of development.
5. Factors which influence development.

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed FED 300 and FED 400.

VI. Category: Historical, Philosophical, Sociological

A. Competency Areas

1. School as a social system.
2. Relationship between school and other institutions in society.
3. Cultural differences and implication for curriculum and teaching.
4. Role history plays in helping individual achieve a broader perspective.
5. Importance of purpose in education.
6. Relationships between societal conditions and the evolution of various education philosophies.
7. Relationship between various philosophical orientation and theories of development and learning.
8. Development of educational agencies and their contributions to the profession.
9. Professionalism in education.

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed FED 350; existing or proposed departmental courses.

VII. Category: Curriculum

A. Competency Areas

1. Factors considered in curriculum construction.
2. Curriculum designs.
3. Impact of various movements.

B. Courses designed to provide opportunity for achieving competencies: Proposed FED 300 and FED 350; existing or proposed departmental courses.

The core now consists of three foundations, one interdepartmental, one educational media, one counselor, and one administration course. The latter two departments, unaccustomed to teaching undergraduates, had to design specific courses for this purpose--and, the course is taught by regular departmental professional staff.

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Summary

The results of this process utilization are quite evident in Auburn's present teacher education program. In addition to the previously listed primary core curriculum areas, new and revised courses have already been implemented and are required of teacher education students in the areas of reading (elementary and secondary), classroom management skills and individualized instruction.

The new core program, introduced in summer quarter, 1978, is intended to be an ongoing program, subject to continued revision for improvement based on feedback from both undergraduate and CPDP participants. Student

evaluations indicate that our initial efforts have been successful. Students generally thought the course material was appropriate and approved of the presentation(s) methods. They also have offered suggestions for the department to consider in making course revisions.

The School of Education at Auburn University now has a "new product--a revised "common core" for all of its teacher education students. It will be in the testing and evaluation stages; it may or may not survive intact. Given the process of development, it will be modified as conditions change and new needs arise. Product or developmental process--which is most important? In the view of the authors, it is the process. It is the process--of developing, validating, testing and evaluating--which is crucial. It is the joint effort of practitioners and School of Education faculty which effects a dynamic process of curriculum development. We consider this to be of primary importance. A curriculum development process which does not tap the rich resources of both the field and college personnel cannot provide a curriculum consisting of anything more than a collection of credit hours. To put it otherwise, curriculum development in teacher education must operationalize the process of utilizing the talents of university faculty and practicing professionals in the field.